

(Washington D.C.)-Ignoring her own commission's recommendation, United States Department of Education Secretary Margaret Spelling stopped short of recommending more money be added to the nation's Pell Grant program to cover escalating college costs. As reported in today's Washington Post:

"Responding to the final report from her Commission on the Future of Higher Education, Spelling also implored schools to hold costs down for low-income students. She pledged to seek more financial aid for students but largely sidestepped the commission's bold proposal for a substantial increase in need-based Pell Grants."

The following statement is in response to Secretary Spelling's reported remarks, that are adjoined by congressional cuts to student aid and other measures of assistance to middle class families and Americans nationwide. The College Board's 2005 'Trends in Student Aid' and "Trends in College Pricing indicate student indebtedness is rising at the same time as the cost of college is going through the roof. The typical student graduate reliant on student aid will be saddled with a loan burden estimated at \$17,500.

"The Bush Administration and Republican Congress continue to deny real assistance to college students and families in need. Tuition costs are out of control, Republicans in Congress made the largest cut to the student loan program in our nation's history cut student aid assistance, and now a self-commissioned study recommending the expansion of the Pell Grant program appears to be ignored. Allowing no debate, or other assistance in regard to this matter and others dealing with minimum wage, the uninsured, even the 9-11 commission report reflects a disturbing pattern of indifference and ineptness of which an educated public, looking out for those unaware and at risk, should take issue." -Congressman Russ Carnahan